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Students say public apathy may be barrier to bikeway plan

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STUDENTS SAY PUBLIC APATHY MAY BE BARRIER TO BIKEWAY PLAN

By Dennis Sale
UM Information Services

MISSOULA--

Public apathy may prove to be one of the biggest barriers to implementation of Phase I of the Missoula Bikeway Plan, according to two University of Montana students who have been active in voicing the values of the bikeway proposal.

The two students--Susan Daniel, Butte, and Duane J. Brant, Cincinnati, Ohio--said the first of several public petitions regarding improved safety conditions for Missoula bike riders will be presented to the Missoula City Council within several weeks to insure that the safety plan is implemented by next spring in the city.

"I am concerned that Missoula citizens are not taking more action to get the bikeway plan started," Miss Daniel said. "It is my hope that city residents will initiate petitions in their neighborhoods for the plan and will present the petitions--signed by as many residents as possible --at a City Council meeting soon."

Brant said University students involved in the Montana Public Interest Research Group (MontPIRG) are working with other UM students to insure that the City Council gives further consideration to the bikeway proposal.

If the City Council okays the bikeway plan in its entirety a number of streets will be resurfaced and bike lanes will be painted and safety signs erected on a total of 287 blocks in Missoula.

more

STUDENTS SAY PUBLIC APATHY--2

"In developing and implementing the bikeway plan we are primarily interested in the safety of Missoula school children and University students," Brant said. "A young girl was killed recently and a University coed was seriously injured not long ago in Missoula as result of bike-car mishaps. Many students of all ages experience near-accidents daily, particularly when people are driving to and from work."

Brant said the Missoula Bikeway Plan is basically a combination of bikeway plans being utilized in cities comparable in size to Missoula--between 30,000 and 40,000 residents.

The Missoula City Council accepted the Missoula Bikeway Plan for consideration in September, referring the plan to its Public Safety Committee for additional study. Brant said streets listed for inclusion under the bikeway plan must be okayed by the safety committee before the bikeway plan can be returned to the City Council for further consideration.

Miss Daniel said the bikeway plan, which was prepared last spring by 61 University students in a UM forestry class, will benefit cyclists who ride bikes for recreational purposes as well as those who ride them to and from work and school.

Brant said Montana law specifies that bike riders age seven and over are required to observe the same driving regulations as persons driving motor vehicles.

"Therefore, those on bikes, particularly youngsters, should have the benefit of safety measures such as bike lanes and signs to help them keep within the law," he said.

"Because of the serious bicycle accidents in Missoula in recent months," Miss Daniel said, "we hope that the safety measures suggested in the Missoula Bikeway Plan will be one step closer to minimizing the chances of such mishaps in the future."

Copies of the Missoula Bikeway Plan, published under the title "The Proposed Missoula Bikeway System," can be obtained from W. C. Hollenbaugh, an associate professor of forestry at UM, Room 449, Science Complex, University of Montana, Missoula, Mont. 59801.

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